

## Neurodiversity at Work Resources

### Land Acknowledgement Resource:

[Indigenous Experiences with Racism and Its Impacts](#) prepared by Samantha Loppie, Charlotte Reading & Sarah de Leeuw

### Types of Neurodivergence:

[About Autism](#)

[Autistic Self Advocate Network](#)

[Dysgraphia](#)

[OCD](#)

[PTSD](#)

[Tinnitus](#)

### Articles of Interest:

[Autism and Depression – How it Can Present Differently in Neurodiverse Individuals by RDIconnect](#)

[Don't Mourn for Us by Jim Sinclair](#)

[Everyday fantasia: The world of synesthesia](#)

[Judy Singer's updated definition of neurodiversity](#)

[Panic Attacks Versus Anxiety Attacks](#)

[Neurodiversity & Neurodivergent: Meanings, Types & Examples](#)



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## Neurodiversity at Work Resources

### Neurodiversity in the Workplace:

[Create a strengths-based culture and embrace neurodiversity in the workplace by the people practice](#) (part 1) by the people practice.

[The 'superpowers' that neurodiverse people bring to the workplace](#) (part 2) by the people practice.

[Neurodiversity as a Competitive Advantage](#) Why you should embrace it in your workforce by Robert D. Austin and Gary P. Pisano

### Suggested Videos:

[30 Essential Ideas you should know about ADHD, 1B Inhibition, Impulsivity, and Emotion](#) by Dr Russell A. Barkley

[How ADHD Ignites Rejection Sensitive Dysphoria](#)

[Human Neurodiversity Should Be Celebrated, Not Treated as a Disorder](#) | Op-Ed | NowThis

[Racial Justice and Neurodiversity](#) by Autistic Self Advocacy Network

[Why Is It So Hard to Do Something That Should Be Easy?](#) (Wall of Awful pt. 1) by How to ADHD

### Work Suggestions:

Encourage self-exploration

Employee exploration can help start conversations that lead to deeper understanding of neurodiversity and other differences. It also benefits neurodivergent folks because they may be undiagnosed and/or not aware of how their neurodivergence affects them. Utilizing quizzes, assessment tools, professional development books, blogs, and articles are ways to staff get a better understanding about co-workers and themselves.

Focus on the result not the process.



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Neurodivergent folks may go about doing their work in a way that doesn't match fellow workers. For example, they may have several days where it doesn't look like they are working then one frenzied day in which they catch up. This is the way their brain needs to be in order to meet their goals. They shouldn't be judged on how they work but rather if the work they present is on time, good, and in keeping with stated goals.

Be okay with people stimming.

This may include them flapping their hands, bouncing knees, rocking, playing with fidget toys, twirling hair. All these aforementioned stims are acceptable behaviour. Learn to try to not be distracted by them. Don't ask the person to not stim. This will lead to a less authentic interaction.

Be flexible.

Understand that an interaction with a community member or staff person one day may need to be altered on a different day. A neurodivergent person may be overwhelmed one day because they meet you at the end of the day whereas another day you meet in the morning and they aren't yet overwhelmed. Allow for people to be fluid.

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Image: Green, yellow, red squares

Colour System

Some community and work spaces use the colour system. Green for you are good to communicate, yellow for okay, and red for not right now. This has also been used for comfort with touch, whether because



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of neurodivergence or covid. Red means no touch, yellow means ask to touch and wait for consent and respect a no, and green for comfortable with touch.

Some workspaces with cubicles have the card pinned on each cubicle and indicates whether that person is okay with someone interrupting their work and talking with them. It was also used when people started returning to work from working at home and some people wanted to hug everyone because they hadn't seen anyone for so long and others wanted no hugs or touching either because of their own comfort levels with touch or because they didn't want to chance a COVID.



Image: Overwhelmed person at laptop.

Some neurodivergent folks can get overwhelmed by too much information all at once. It can help to break information or instruction into pieces and give as you go instead of all at once.

Having tasks broken up into smaller tasks can also help give a boosted sense of accomplishment because there are many successes along the way instead of just one finish line.

Have your company partner with ready-made food companies (Fed, HelloFresh, etc.) to give staff discounts. Encourage staff to not skip breaks and meals.

It's important to not rely solely on body language. Neurodivergent people may be masking. People with chronic pain may be dealing with pain.

Be aware of sensory triggers and whether your interactions can happen in less sensorily overwhelming spaces.

Try not to use sarcasm, vagueness, and/or metaphors. Be clear, concise and direct.

Use summarizing statements such as "so what you are saying is..."



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Know that neurodivergent folks often share stories from their own life to support what you are saying in the conversation. This can often be seen as their being egotistical and constantly redirecting the conversation to them. Instead, it is their way of offering empathy. It is a valid way to communicate.

It's important that non-neurodivergent folks say what they mean. Many neurodivergent folks take conversations literally. Try not to use sarcasm, vagueness, and/or metaphors.

Because some neurodivergent people are so literal, they are often perceived as rude or blunt. If someone asks a question, they may not sugar coat it or soften the answer. Try not to take this personally.

Do not touch them unless given permission prior to the touch.

Neurotypical people have linear conversations. They follow expected routes. Neurodivergence folks don't have linear conversations. We often bounce from one thing to another and the person we are communicating with doesn't understand how we got from one thing to another. Neurotypicals may need you to spell out your thinking process.

Some neurodivergent folks get overwhelmed by too much information all at once. It can help to break information or instruction into pieces and give as you go instead of all at once.

Neurodivergent folks' often have an intense passion for a specific topic or interest. Neurotypical and neurodivergent people alike enjoy special interests. Interests can speak to a person's identity, they can create community and improve connections. For neurodivergent folk, they can also be a way to deal with a world that is not built for them and is often actively hostile against them. It can reduce the chaos and confusion. It can provide a sense of understanding and order. This comfort can sometimes lead to the interests becoming all-consuming.

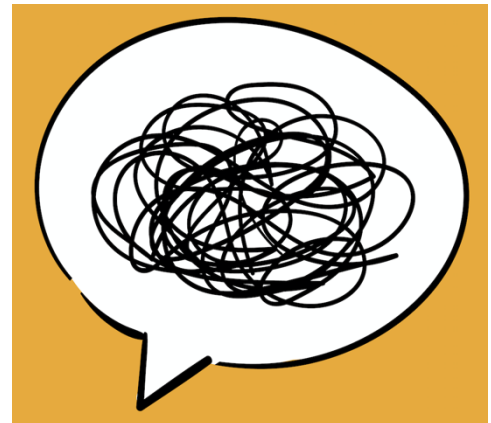


Image: Speech bubble with a tangle of black



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People may want to talk about their special interests all the time and share what they know with others. Infodumping refers to when neurodivergent folks excitedly share huge amounts of information about a topic and/or hobby they are very passionate about and which they may have researched or learned about in great detail and length.

### Tips Not Included in the Workshop:

Don't hand in work early. Some neurodivergent people are able to get done in a short period of time, through intense hyperfocus, what takes others much longer. During this hyperfocus, neurodivergent people forget to do vital things like eat, drink water, use the washroom, rest, etc. Hyperfocus tends to exhaust mind and body. Following hyperfocus, neurodivergent people need time to rebound. This is why it is important that the deliverable not be submitted before a deadline. By submitting work early, it indicates that one is ready for more work without accounting for recovery time. It often leads to management expecting neurodivergent staff to do more work for the same pay, which just adds more stress.



Image: Person working on a laptop late at night in a dark office.

Management should focus on the outcome of a neurodivergent person's work and not the process. Neurodivergent people work in different ways. They are often accused of being lazy because they are not externally working like other staff. But neurodivergent folks often require rest and recovery time because they work in short, intense, periods of hyperfocus. Instead of focusing on how a staff member works (unless it is negatively impacting others), focus on the outcome.

For some, hyperfocus comes with interruption rage, the feeling of frustration and rage when someone breaks one's hyperfocus. Going



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into hyperfocus is like creating a bubble for yourself and going down deep into the ocean to be away from the world. Hyperfocus shuts out everything else. When someone interrupts a person in hyperfocus, they break the bubble and bring the person to the surface quicker than they can handle. Because many people with neurodivergence experience emotional dysregulation, they can lash out at those who broke the concentration because they know it is hard to get back into that space. Having a system that indicates, in advance of an interaction, whether the person can speak or not, is useful. For example, having an "okay to interrupt" "don't interrupt" sign on the outside of a cubicle.

"Add half hour block before meetings with specific tasks – helps you remember to actually do boring mundane tasks, forces you to do them right before the meeting (urgency), overestimate the amount of time it will take so that you can finish early, boost your self esteem, and provide momentum to be productive." Kunal Pathade

### Useful workplace accommodations:

- Soundproof headphones
- Working from home
- Written checklists (helps with prioritization and overwhelm)
- A paid hour of therapy per week
- ADHD coach
- Dedicated quiet space
- Ownership of desk at work.
- Able to start workday slightly earlier or later (avoid overwhelm of rush hour)
- Fidget toys
- More frequent and shorter breaks
- Meeting preparation time
- Breaking larger tasks up into smaller tasks
- Mini deadlines to fire up urgency and brain
- Having standing desk,



Image: Person wearing soundproof headphones in the office.



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Having options in seating (seats on wheels, seats that offer back adjustability, seats that allow people to sit cross legged, seats that allow for fidgeting, etc. )

Communicate clearly

Allow dim lights in

Allow headphones and sunglasses

Understand stimming/allow fidget

Have a quiet room

Make deadlines clear

Green plants - biophilia

Natural light with views of nature

Dedicated space with adaptable, soft lighting,

Outdoor green space

Privacy curtains to minimize distractions (high school with all glass)

Carpet wayfinding

Multifunctional calm

A variety of collaboration settings that provide choice and empowerment that suit's everyone's needs

Focus pods for individual work

Meeting room booking system that gives a clear visual information of what rooms are free (green/red next to door)

Separating the printers and breakout space from the office to reduce disruptions from sound and smells

Workplace psychologist – dedicated to helping everyone.

30 minute buffer between 2:00 – 6:00 and lunch (ramp up and cool down periods)

Nervous system reset between meetings (weighted blanket, re-grounding with pet cuddle, washing hand with really cold water, lying down)



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## Neurodiversity at Work Resources



Image: Person lying on couch, taking a break with their grey sleeping cat.



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